

ADEPT Political Commentaries

February-April 2002

The political crisis in Moldova

February 26, 2002

On February 24, 2002 the deputies of the Christian-Democratic Peoples' Party met in Chisinau with their voters. The rally was organized to review the results of the Communist's one year governing. At the rally the leaders of the protestors read a list of authorities' mistakes and failures, asked for their resignation and early parliamentary elections.

So far, it's hard to imagine that the communists will give up the power so easily. Firstly, they were democratically elected and their rating is still very high. Secondly, during the April congress communists declared that their victory in elections was a victory of the world communist movement, and that their possible failure would be a demoralizing factor for the entire world movement. Thirdly, during the congress Moldovan communist leaders warned that they are ready to turn Moldova into a European Cuba, if their governing is at threat. It's curious that last week, President Voronin insinuated that he is unsatisfied with Strasbourg officials, who fail to react to the protest rallies in Chisinau, which they label as illegal.

Also on February 24, 2002 the organization of a referendum on the revocation of the Bashkan Dumitru Croitor was thwarted in Gagauz-Yeri. Strangely enough, upon crisis the Gagauz leaders, who over the year demonstrated their strategic alliance with separatists in Tiraspol, turned for help to Strasbourg, claiming that democratic norms and the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova should be observed. The fact was appreciated on the Great National Assembly Square, when during the rally Christian-Democrats' leader Iurie Rosca stressed the need of solidarity with national minorities in view of promoting democratic values. This was the second blow on the minorities' unconditional support to communists, after the leaders of the Ukrainian community expressed their doubts about communist authorities' intention to declare Russian as a state language.

All those facts greatly damage the governing party's image. Constitutional Court ruling outlawing Parliament decision on establishing early parliamentary elections brought to light the conflict between the President of the country, who asked for unconditional respect of the Court ruling, and the leader of the Communist parliament faction, Victor Stepaniuc, who stated that elections will still be conducted. It was obvious for a long time that Voronin and Stepaniuc have different points of view. The Presidency recognized that it was a mistake to approach in such a thoughtless manner the linguistic and history problems. Though, Stepaniuc stated that from a political point of view it is inadmissible to give up the said initiatives, even if they triggered the protest rallies. Another illustration of the is the President Voronin intention to edify an independent Republic of Moldova State, contested by Stepaniuc's participation in the Congress of the NIS Communist Parties where at issue was the USSR restoration. And finally last week the new Editor-in-chief of the official newspaper Sovereign Moldova claimed that President Voronin intends to build neither communism nor socialism. This may demoralize party members who realize that their leaders are preoccupied by internal fights and consequently give up their ideals. Indeed, the party program specifically provides for the edification of the socialist society based on the Marxist-Leninist theory. Still a party scission benefits nobody. Without the support of the parliamentary faction, President Voronin found himself in the trap of the parliamentary republic set by his predecessor Petru Lucinschi. On the other hand, Communist extremist wing wouldn't be able to survive politically without such a leader as Vladimir Voronin.

Political crisis is dramatically worsening also due to the fact that candidates to the Finance and Economy Ministers were not identified over the last month. The fact that even the so-called saboteurs refuse to be the scapegoats in the Tarlev Government is an indicator worth considering. Representatives of the international financial organizations have already made public their concern, as there is nobody to negotiate with the foreign debts and their restructuring. That is why, Prime Minister Tarlev himself could be the next victim. His resignation would bring new people in Government would deal exclusively with economics. Tarlev resignation may be presented as a yield to the protesters. As the political elite is aware of a possible financial collapse in the summer, it is very unlikely that it will be satisfied by some palliative measures. From this point of view, a possible persecution of the Christian-Democratic Peoples' Party wouldn't bring any advantages to the governors. The extra-parliamentary opposition might take the place of the Christian-democrats, asserting itself as the third force, which in order to overcome the conflict would call the people to express their will in early general elections. The problem is that early elections conducted based on the current full proportional system wouldn't clear at all the political situation in the Republic of Moldova.

Early general local elections were declared unconstitutional

February 20, 2002

During its February 19 session the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova ruled that Parliament decision on conducting early general local elections on April 7 is unconstitutional. The Court justified its ruling by the fact that by holding general local elections Article 109 of the Constitution on the eligibility of the local public administration bodies may be infringed.

Commenting the event, President Vladimir Voronin stated that as a guarantor of the Republic of Moldova's sovereignty he calls all the public administration bodies of the country to observe Constitutional Court's ruling.

Domestic analysts claim that besides legal grounds for passing such a ruling there were political ones as well. Those played a crucial role in blocking the process of restoring soviet-model local public administration reformed in 1998 - 1999 in compliance with the principles of the European Charter "Autonomous exercise of the local power". As a matter of fact, representatives of the Council of Europe who visited Moldova as part of the monitoring mission of the democratic processes expressed their concern regarding Communist authorities' intention to revise the principles of local public self-administration. Representatives of the Congress of Local and Regional Governments, a specialized body of the Council of Europe, specifically stated which of the Chart provisions would be infringed in such a case. Namely, Article 6 of the Charter specifically providing that residents of the local communities should be consulted in a referendum on whether they support changes in administrative-territorial units' boundaries. Furthermore, the delegation stated that termination before the term of the elected officials' mandate is a violation of the contract between the voters and the bodies they elect.

Political situation in the Republic of Moldova has been worsening continuously since January 9, 2002 when non-stop protest actions against the policies promoted by the Communist governing party were launched. A series of non-governmental organizations protested against the introduction of compulsory Russian lessons in the primary schools (despite the lack of support materials or failure to consult the parents); the replacement of the History of Romanians course with the History of Moldova; as well as the censure at the national TV and radio stations, etc.

In mid February the number of participants in the daily protests ranged from 10.000 to 30.000 people. The protestors headed by the leader of the Christian-Democratic Peoples' Party have gradually changed their claims, transforming the protests into a movement against communist authorities. Now the protestors claim the resignation of the Communists and general elections.

Protests in Chisinau are unfolding in parallel with another conflict in Gagauz-Yeri, triggered by the control conducted by the Court of Accounts in Gagauz-Yeri. The latter lead to a scission in the Gagauz-Yeri General Assembly, which started the procedure of dismissing the Bashkan, Dumitru Croitor. Obviously, the political conflict unfolding in the South of the Republic of Moldova may result in a greater ethnical conflict. Gagauz authorities would like to pretend that is not the issue of embezzlement at stake, but rather a fight between Gagauz authorities and those Chisinau, which attempt to infringe their autonomy.

Moreover, communist authorities are not in good terms with the neighborhood countries, Romania and Ukraine, the former being blamed of interfering in the internal affairs of Moldova, the second of favoring smuggling from Transdnistria, failing to comply with the new customs regulations of the Republic of Moldova.

Under those circumstances early local elections might have had unforeseeable impact, that is why Constitutional Court's ruling is a very elegant way to back out from early local elections without damaging communists' image. On the contrary, President Voronin stated that he would defend the constitutional order in the country. It is true that the President's councilor foresaw such a development, blaming the Parliament majority and the Government for the current political crisis.

Meanwhile the Christian Democrats may celebrate their first victory. However, given the fact that early local elections are not being held, they will have to change their message. No doubt, Christian-democrats won't give up their strategic offensive against communist authorities. On the other hand, authorities may claim that by giving up early local elections they complied with domestic and international norms, thus illustrating how a deadlock may be overcome. They will insist Christian-Democrats to follow their example and give up the illegal protests. Consequently, it is difficult to predict the future developments. One thing is clear, communists intend to hold a referendum to consult the citizens on all the issues that triggered the deadlock. It is very unlikely that the protesters will agree.

2002 Local Elections

February 12, 2002

On February 5, 2002 the Parliament set the date for early general elections - April 7, 2002. During its first session held on February 7, the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) adopted a resolution on establishing 37 electoral districts (in 32 rayons, in 3 municipalities - Chisinau, Balti, Bender; in Gagauz-Yeri Administrative Territorial Unit; and in Transdnistria). Under the Electoral Code provisions Rayon Electoral Commissions shall establish District Electoral Commissions and about 1700 precincts.

CEC made public the list of parties and other socio-political organizations entitled to run in elections. The CEC also adopted sample voter rolls and petitions for the registration of independent candidates. Furthermore, CEC estimated the budget for the local elections, which is to be approved by the Parliament.

So far, the creation of two very strong electoral blocs has been made public. "Serafim Urechean" Electoral Bloc includes 10 political parties: Party of Rebirth and Reconciliation (headed by Mircea Snegur), Independents' Alliance (Serafim Urechean), Party of Democratic Forces (Valeriu Matei), Social Liberal Union "Moldovan Force" (Veaceslav Untila), etc. The second electoral bloc Social Democratic Alliance of Moldova is formed of the Social Democratic Union (Dumitru Braghis) and Democratic Party (Dumitru Diacov).

The leader of the Social Liberal Party, Oleg Serebrian, called other political parties to boycott the early general local election on the grounds that they are a "political farce and a trap to democracy".

Given the launch of the electoral campaign, the Minister of Justice decided to cancel his decision on suspension of the Christian Democratic Peoples' Party (PPCD) activity, so as not to breach the rights of the party supporters.

Other political parties claim that early elections are unnecessary and represent an abuse from behalf of the Communist parliamentary majority. Representatives of the Congress of Local and Regional Powers of the Council of Europe stated that Moldovan authorities breached the provisions of the European Charter "Autonomous Exercise of the Local Power", when they modified the administrative-territorial division of the Republic of Moldova without previously consulting the communities during a referendum. Also, the communists ended the 4-year mandate of the local authorities, which was due to expire in May 2003.

In accordance with the modified Law on Local Public Administration mayors will be elected indirectly. They will be designated by at least 1/3 of elected councilors and will be elected by the majority vote of the elected councilors.

In addition other modifications have been operated to the Electoral Code reducing electoral campaigns to two months (previously 3 months).

Is a social pact possible in the Republic of Moldova?

March 27, 2002

In an interview offered to the *Nezavisimaia Moldova* governmental newspaper on March 15, President Vladimir Voronin pointed that the Republic of Moldova "lacks efficient democratic mechanisms, allowing a permanent dialog with the society". In order to initiate the dialog the President held meetings with journalists, trade unions, NGOs, ethnic minorities, etc, with whom "he should effectuate a Social Pact". The President views the social pact as the first step towards "building civil society", which in its turn would ensure citizens consensus on a certain "ethic-moral" order.

On March 20, *Moldova Suverana* and *Nezavisimaia Moldova* governmental newspapers published the Appeal of the President Voronin: "On the Social Pact". Various non-governmental organizations, trade unions, etc praised the President's initiative, all the same it was viewed with suspicion. Firstly, during his one year governing the President was very prolific in launching various initiatives, which proved to be unfinished (such as fighting corruption, recovery of the economy real sector, settling Transdnistrian conflict, edifying a Moldovan nation, etc). Secondly, from the very beginning the President made clear that he won't dialogue with other political parties, whose leaders he views as "failed politicians". Though, political parties are the ones involved in the political conflict unfolding in the Republic of Moldova. And last but not least, presidential message points the need to dialogue only with the so-called "healthy forces". This "healthy forces" phrase raises a series of questions. As political parties and non-partisan organizations are legal entities registered by the Ministry of Justice in compliance with the constitutional right to free association, who may assume the right to decide which of them are "healthy" and which aren't? What are the criteria for selecting "health forces"? Probably, the President intended to let citizens themselves decide which are the unhealthy forces. He just pointed what are in his opinion the destabilizing factors for the Republic of Moldova: geopolitical interests of other states; poor economic situation; territorial disintegration of the Republic of Moldova; Western and Eastern unionism; and the gap between public officers and society. It seems that the major obstacle in eliminating those destabilizing factors is the Communist Party itself, headed by President Voronin, rather than the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary opposition.

Obviously the Communist Party strives to prove the contrary. Communist Party leaders continuously accuse Romania for "interfering in the Republic of Moldova affairs" in order to undermine the Republic of Moldova statehood. According to the Moldovan officials Romania interferes by allowing Moldovan young people to study in Romania, consequently they are "more indoctrinated than educated", as well as by supporting Bessarabian Church. Though, Romania on every occasion reiterates that it recognizes the independence of the Republic of Moldova and is ready to support Moldova in its efforts to join the European Union in the future. Out of all domestic political parties, the Christian Democratic Peoples' Party (CDPP) is the only one accused of undermining Republic of Moldova statehood on the grounds that for the last decade it has advocated unification of the Republic of Moldova and Romania. It is known for a fact that the rating of the CDPP has never exceeded 10%. Also, during the VI-th Congress held on December 11, 1999, CDPP adopted a new political program whose major goals are "achieving national unity based on Christian morality" and "Republic of Moldova adhesion to the European Union in the foreseeable future". It seems there are no grounds for

political confrontations. Firstly, after the parliamentary elections of February 25, 2001 the Communist Party holds the constitutional majority - 71% seats in Parliament. Secondly, the Government voted by the Communists adopted in January the "Strategy for the Republic of Moldova development in the mid-term future", which also provides establishing a favorable environment for the Republic of Moldova joining EU. What is then the reason for destabilizing the political situation in the country?

Opposition parties claim that the Communist Party is a revanchist political party exploiting people's nostalgia for a secure life in electoral campaigns, but unable to modernize the society. According to them this is the major destabilization factor. The current political situation when Communists chase "unhealthy forces" is a screen hiding the governors' political and economic incompetence. As for destabilizing factors mentioned by President Voronin, the opposition points that:

1. Only one country has openly declared that it has geopolitical interests in this region (i.e. Russia viewed by the Communist Party as the main strategic partner of the Republic of Moldova);
2. Tiraspol separatist leaders justify the existence of the unconstitutional breakaway separatist region to the left of Dniester by the need to represent Russia's interests in the Balkans (according to them Transdnistria a Russian land);
3. Poor economic situation of the Republic of Moldova is due to the reluctance of the Communist Party and its strategic ally, Democratic Agrarian Party, which governed between 1992 and 1998, to promote economic reforms;
4. It is a nonsense to accuse a political party accounting only for 10% of the seats in Parliament of undermining Republic of Moldova statehood, when the governing party itself has the following provision in its political program adopted in April 2001: "The Communist Party is the full rights member of the Union of the Communist Parties and views its consolidation as a binding political condition for the reconstruction on a voluntary and renewed basis of the Federation of the Sovereign Republics having equal rights, i.e. URSS;
5. And finally the instability generated by the split between the governors and society may be overcome only if the governing party manifests political will.

Given the above said, there are a series of problems awaiting resolution before a "Social Pact" may be achieved. First of all, the credibility of the governing party should be restored, as there is a huge difference between their declarations and actions, and during their one-year governing they made a series of mistakes which triggered the current crisis in Moldova.

At his meeting with representatives of non-governmental organizations, on March 22 President Voronin admitted that he wasn't aware of the existence of a permanent framework for discussions between NGOs and public authorities. Such a framework is provided during National NGO Forum, conducted periodically once in two years since 1997, and where public authorities are permanently invited. During the three editions of the NGO Forum the latter were present only with greeting messages. It is not a surprise then, that under those circumstances any dialogue is blocked. It seems that the same holds true for trade unions, religious organizations, and political parties. Hearings at the European Court of Human Rights, the last Congress of the Businessmen, critics voiced by the political parties, trade unions' protests - all those events are another illustration to the above said.

In his appeal, Voronin is concerned about the lack of "efficient democratic mechanisms, allowing a permanent dialogued with the society". Journalists claim that a public audiovisual institution broadcasting on the entire territory of the country could be the best mechanism in this respect. Some high-rank officials accused TV journalists on strike of partisanship and lack of professionalism. Nevertheless the entire society witnessed how since the victory of the Communist Party, the National TV Station (funded from the state budget) has been broadcasting ideology reports about pioneer and comsomol organizations, etc and ignored to cover topical issues. That is why, freeing National TV and Radios Stations from censure and ideology as demanded by journalists on strike, as well as turning "Teleradio Moldova" State Company into a real public audiovisual institution, would prove authorities' willingness to reopen the dialogue with the society.

Political Parties, on the other hand, claim that it is the Communist Party doctrine (Marxism - Leninism) which blocks the dialogue, as it runs counter to the civil society values: pluralism of ideas, competition of values, etc. Given the difference between the values shared by the Communist Party and civil society, a social dialogue might have a chance if the mediator, i.e. the President of the country, will give up the position of Chairman of the Communist Party. Though, the President indicated that he wouldn't do this. Under those circumstances, the President may want to initiate a reform of the party he is heading, turning it into a social-democratic orientation, as was recommended by the writer Ion Drutsa.

Analysts claim that the current political crisis in the Republic of Moldova was triggered by the Communists' decision to make use of the constitutional majority they hold and try to "decree the truth" with regard to very sensitive issues such as language and history. They claim that citizens' right to ethnic self-identification prevails in societies split on linguistic criteria, such as the Moldovan society.

And finally, another obstacle to social dialogue is the fact that President Voronin sees strengthening Republic of Moldova's independence in fostering "state patriotism". The notion of "state patriotism" introduces a deliberate confusion of the "Motherland" and "state" and it is a very strange one. In this respect, it is worth mentioning the example of Alexandr Soljenitsin, whom President Voronin greatly respects. Indeed, one could hardly question Mr. Soljenitsin patriotism, despite the fact that he questioned the essence of a Communist state, for which he was expelled from the country.

Analysts who doubt the success of a Social Pact, point out that economic situation of the Republic of Moldova and authorities' tolerance toward their opponents' opinions are the major factors, which could contribute to the strengthening of the Republic of Moldova statehood. An evidence of progresses in this respect would be the best step in reopening a dialogue between the power and society.

Could a referendum settle a political crisis?

March 5, 2002

Political crisis in the Republic of Moldova has attained a new dimension this week. After protesters' march to the Teleradio Moldova State Company, about 400 company employees declared a Japanese strike in protest to the censure established by the authorities at the National Radio and TV Stations. Journalists' act might have a great impact as their accusations of censure are related to the violation of the constitutional principles regarding the human rights.

Supreme Court of Justice ruling outlawing protest rallies determined authorities to resume threatening organizers of the rallies for involving children in the. The problem is that the protesters headed by Christian Democratic People's Party (PPCD) leaders haven't done anything that the communists didn't do. Last year the Communists were the ones to engage kids in politics by establishing pioneer and Comsomol organizations in schools. During a live TV show last week Dumitru Braghis, leader of a parliament faction, brought about this fact when he scolded Victor Stepaniuc, leader of the Communist faction in Parliament. From this perspective, authorities cannot fulfil their threats.

The authorities and official press qualify the current situation as "the social peace and order have been partially lost for the moment". That is why the idea of a referendum, which "would put an end to the attempts of those who aim to destroy the Moldovan state" seems to recur lately. A problem arises here as well. There is no political party in the Republic of Moldova, which would dispute in its bylaws the existence of a Moldovan state in the long run. It was the Communist party to be the last one to exclude from its bylaws such an objective, whose achievement would have meant loosing the independence of the Republic of Moldova. It was only last year during the April congress, that the governing party adopted a new program, which does not refer to the party membership in the Union of Communist Parties of the Community of Independent States (UCPCIS), whose goal is to rebuild the URSS. Nevertheless, the Communist Party is still a member of the UCPCIS. Furthermore, Moldovan Communists took part in the last UCPCIS congress in October, where at issues was the fulfillment of the strategic goal, i.e. rebuilding USSR. This happened after President representatives stated in August that "any discussion on the independence of the Republic of Moldova may be considered as undermining of the state". From this perspective the latest actions of the governing party seem more like self-conviction. Indeed, the Communist Party accuses European institutions of applying double standards, when it itself is not so much different.

As for the referendum itself, there are several issues to be considered. Firstly, authorities need a political will to initiate such a referendum. In compliance with the electoral law, a referendum may be initiated by a group of at least 300 citizens. Then 200,000 signatures need to be collected. Also, a referendum may be initiated by 1/3 of the deputies in Parliament, and by the President of the country. It is very unlikely that the President would accept to initiate such a referendum. A referendum may be lost as well, and General Charles De Gaulle's example - resigning after initiating and loosing a referendum - is an eloquent illustration. The example has been used since to represent how respect for its own people is manifested.

As it takes a long time for the citizens to initiate a referendum, it seems that the only ones left to do the job are the Parliament deputies. Though this conclusion doesn't help too much. To initiate a referendum, questions subject to the referendum should be clearly formulated. So far, we could only assume what will be the questions subject to referendum. Constitutional Court reject to examine issues related to declaring Russian as the second state language. Issues related to the history study or patriotism would seem too exaggerated for referendum questions. So, it would take a while to just properly formulate the questions. Noteworthy, the Parliament may establish referendum date only six months after initiating it and the referendum is to be conducted two months later. However, general local elections are due next spring. And if a referendum is held in spring, under the electoral law elections may be held only 4 months later.

It is very unlikely that by the time referendum date is set Transdnistrian authorities will agree to a referendum on left bank of Dniester. It is also unclear whether Gagauz citizens will take part in the referendum, given continuously worsening relations between Chisinau and Comrat. The fact that polling places were destroyed during the February 24 referendum held to oust the incumbent Bashkan (Governor) proves that such a scenario may not be excluded. Under given circumstances the legality of referendum results may not be ensured.

Furthermore, the current economic situation does not allow Moldova to engage in a half a year electoral marathon, with a national referendum and elections. In addition, the authorities are committed to conduct a national census in October, which also requires quite an amount of money. And given the unrest in the society the situation gets very complicated.

This being said, we could only agree with the official press, namely the major accomplishment of the governing party has been overcoming syndromes and shocks. Thus, since their victory in February 25, 2001 elections, Communist have been trying to overcome "opposition syndrome", whereas now they are undergoing through another extreme "shocks of their electoral performances" (71 mandates in Parliament). Under those circumstances, citizens of the Republic of Moldova could only wonder when everything would get back to normal?

Referendum on the modification of the electoral system

April 29, 2002

Political confrontation of the last three months between the Communist governing and Christian-Democrat opposition reached the stage when the Resolutions of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe could be enforced. Otherwise, both the power and opposition have much to loose. In his appeal to the protestors in the Town of Freedom the leader of the Christian-Democratic Peoples' Party, Iurie Rosca stated that the protest rallies would cease immediately he and Victor Stepaniuc draft an agreement on the enforcement of the resolutions passed in Strasbourg.

It might seem that the settlement of the political crisis, in which both the power and opposition claim to be the winners, is so close. Indeed, what the Christian-Democrats achieved is that the power undertook to enforce the objectives the opposition was pursuing for many years. The Communist governing got out of the crisis more consolidated, with an extremely high rating, and more importantly, having a reasonable excuse for not fulfilling their electoral promise. The image of the constructive opposition and that of the extra-parliamentary opposition is very shabby under current circumstances.

Nevertheless, one may foresee new confrontations, but this time between governing party and constructive opposition, led by the former Prime Minister Dumitru Braghis, incumbent leader of the Social Democrat Alliance. Last week the Central Electoral Commission registered an initiative group formed out of 608 persons, which intends to conduct this fall a legislative referendum on a new electoral system for parliamentary and local elections. The leaders of the initiative group recommend that 50% of the deputies be elected on party lists in a national constituency, whereas the rest 50% in uninominal constituencies. As for the election of county councilors the initiative group recommends a majority system.

Until mid-July members of the initiative group should collect 200,000 signatures in support of their initiative, which then would have to be verified by the CEC. Only then, the Parliament would decide to declare or not a referendum for this fall.

It is important to understand what are the grounds for initiating a referendum. There is no doubt that the leaders of the initiative group could bring a lot of arguments in support of changing the current electoral system.

The arguments are related firstly, to the fact that the system of closed party lists complied by the party leaders guided by some obscure and non-transparent criteria, boost corruption and result in scandals and scissions within the parties. Secondly, opinion polls indicate that the great majority of the population disapproves the current proportional electoral system due to the fact that it does not allow for a strong relationship between voters and deputies. Another draw back of current system is the fact that 70% of the incumbent deputies represent party elite from the capital. And finally, the previous three electoral campaigns conducted based on the proportional system didn't led to a strong party system, on the contrary the permanent games of increasing the threshold of representation has led to the collapse of the political center. The abusive increase of the threshold of representation reduces the effects of proportional representation, and generates distortions. Thus during the last elections in

addition to the 50 mandates it received, Communist party got another 20, which is more than the total number of mandates received by the Braghis Alliance, the second largest parliamentary faction.

Further, the leaders of the initiative group cite the advice of the writer, Ion Drutsa, given as a reply to President Voronin's open letter of January 17. Ion Drutsa replied to the President after two months by recommending among others to change the electoral system. It is believed that the governmental newspaper republished Ion Drutsa's letter only to disguise Voronin's disappointment and to exclude the possibility of other newspapers publishing it first. Anyway after the response was published no actions were undertaken. Now, the constructive opposition may ask the President of the country - what's the use of addressing for advice to someone known to be "a master of founding and building" when the advice is ignored?

Another illustration to the fact is the Communist newspaper's criticism over the referendum idea. The newspaper accuses the initiative group of readiness to buy the voters' signatures. Further, the authors point that a possible change of the electoral system might have similar effects to those in Ukrainian parliamentary elections, when voters' option in favor of Victor Iushenko's bloc was annihilated by the presidential administration. Allegedly, the latter resorted to administrative levers to determine the candidates elected in uninominal districts to adhere to the pro-presidential faction, which on the contrary enjoyed a meager voters' support at the national level, only the third place.

Noteworthy, Christian-Democratic opposition is also dissatisfied with a change of the electoral system. In the last 8 years Christian-Democrats enjoyed a steady rating ranging from 7 - 10%. The statistics indicates that it is very unlikely Christian-Democrat candidates would receive the majority of votes in uninominal constituencies, consequently a possible mixed system might substantially diminish Christian-Democrats performance in elections.

The relationships between authorities and opposition after three months of protests

April 22, 2002

The events produced last week mark a new stage in the relationships between the power and opposition. After more than three months of opposition protest rallies on the one hand, and threats to the protesters on the other, the leaders of the majority and those of the protesting opposition, Iurie Rosca and constructive-conciliation opposition Dumitru Braghisi, decided to initiate a dialogue.

It seems that the transition from confrontation to dialogue was induced by two major events. Firstly, the meetings all three parliament faction leaders had in Strasbourg with Walter Shwimmer, General Secretary of Council of Europe in order to identify ways of settling the crisis. Secondly, last week Institute of Public Policies released the results of an opinion poll. The results indicate that Christian-Democrats preserve their rating, and this despite the fact that they had been in the spotlight the last couple of months. On the other hand, the same poll indicates that the rating of the Communist Party has considerably increased, reaching almost 70 %. Although comprising more than 20 parties, the so-called "political center" is absent from the top of voters' preferences. The strongest centrist party - Social Democratic Alliance headed by the former Prime Minister, Dumitru Braghisi, is supported by only 3% of the voters.

Both events, the meeting in Strasbourg and poll results, have resulted in a change of attitude of the faction leaders. The leader of the Communist faction, Victor Stepaniuc, admitted in front of the journalists that since their last year victory Communists have undertaken some clumsy measures. Stepaniuc's attitude reminded of a scolded child, who promised to learn the rules of a decent political behavior. It is worth pointing out that as a result in the last two weeks the Communists proved to be extremely zealous. They assured the opposition that they would provide them access to national television and radio and would change the procedure of lifting the deputies' immunity. Further, they sent for the expertise of the Council of Europe a series of recently passed legal acts, even though the latter didn't asked them to.

On the other hand, the leader of Christian-Democrats, Iurie Rosca has smoothly turned from demands on Government resignation and early parliamentary elections to providing public lessons on democracy to Communists. The CDPP leader reiterated in front of the journalists and their cameras, the abuses and offences on democracy made by the Communist governing, namely right to freedom of thought, censure, suppressing independence of the judiciary and local public administration. He noted that a true democracy could not rely on the goodwill of the authorities that promise not to commit abuses, rather it should rely on a set of laws aimed to prevent the abusive behavior of the authorities. In this respect, Rosca indicated that the judiciary branch in the Republic of Moldova is serving the authorities, that is why they had to appeal in the European Court on Human Rights the ruling of the Supreme Court of Justice on the illegality of protest rallies. CDPP leader believes that it is inappropriate to cease the protest rallies, as long as the factors, which brought the people on the street, are not eliminated. So, the political duel in which Christian-Democrats will be in offensive and Communists in defensive would continue.

No doubt, the way the current political crisis is unfolding leaves the impression that the Republic of Moldova is an entropic system, whose normal state is necessarily a certain degree of political chaos. Fortunately this entropic system is dissipative, and the influence of external factors is decisive. In this respect the session of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, scheduled for April 24, on the state of democratic institutions in the Republic of Moldova will have a decisive impact on the power - opposition relationship. Further, despite the fact that the results of the latest opinion poll favor Moldovan Communists, the recent developments in Russia and Ukraine, where Communists suffered a great loss, illustrate that the red horizons are far and far away.

The officials of the international monetary institutions who recently visited the Republic of Moldova indicated that they might resume crediting Moldova this summer. This would open the possibility of spreading out payments or even canceling foreign debts. Thus, the Communist "Titanic" might avoid the collision with the iceberg called *default*. For this to happen, the navigation course tailored according to the party program, adopted exactly one year ago on April 22, need to be replaced by another one tailored according to the coordinates set by the Council of Europe and other international institutions.